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Learning and education

– material conditions and consequences

[721] THE ORGANIZATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION OF ONLINE TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Research topic/Aim: This research focus on the organizational implementation aspects of a large longitudinal research project that investigates the development and implementation of an online resource for teacher professional development (oTPD) called KlogPåNaturfag.dk (KpN). This was carried out as a case study in a school district. Here, the decision to partake in KpN was taken by the district administration and the school-management, and co-orchestrated with the KpN supplier and the district pedagogical consultant, though teacher participation was seen as voluntarily (as opposed to TPD that are either staged as mandatory or individually managed in out-of-job settings). This setup is a typical scenario in a Danish context, and the aim was to study the many roles and processes influencing the practices of the teachers, while involved in oTPD.

Theoretical frameworks: The research is grounded in theory related to (o)TPD, transfer theory and to the implementation of professional development in general, as organisational learning, culture and management theory. In TPD, the literature points out that the tensions affecting development and implementation, have not changed much during the past decade. Moreover, improvements in the field of oTPD are difficult given the lack of findings based on strong methods of evaluation and research about what strategies work well and why (Dede et al, 2016, p. 6). Therefore, the purpose of the case study was to drive a research-based case study, generating domain specific knowledge that can guide a similar implementation in the future.

Methodology/research design: The case study applies a hermeneutic and pragmatic approach to knowledge creation. Besides the district administration and school management, 6 schools with 50 science teachers were involved. The empirical data is both qualitative (primary data) and quantitative (secondary data). The qualitative data were derived from interviews with all stakeholders, including focus-group-interviews with almost 30 teachers, as well as observation from initiatives part of the TPD-process as two workshops. The quantitative data consist of teacher surveys before and after the oTPD, and backend log-data from KpN.

Expected conclusions/Findings: The analysis shows that the number of stakeholders involved challenged the implementation, particularly communication and division of responsibilities. The process was characterized by fragmented communication and diffusion of information, and confusion about who did what (or not) and why. This resulted in very little activity during the oTPD-period and in a very high dropout-rate. However, though many challenges were identified, new opportunities in this form of organizational implementation of oTPD were also uncovered.

Relevance for Nordic Educational Research: Professional development is a key element of the new Danish school reform, and municipalities across the country works with the governmental 2020-objective, to have certified teachers in all subjects (Jespersen & Hansen, 2013). In general, the competence level of teachers and in particular K1-12 teachers is a topic of interest for many politicians in Scandinavia and Internationally. There is therefore also an increased managerial attention towards TPD in general and oTPD specifically as it is time